THE BERLIN QUESTION:
1961 – June 1971

Paul C. Mossemer

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

PREFACE i

CHAPTER I. HISTORICAL SETTING 1

CHAPTER II. BERLIN AS VIEWED FROM WASHINGTON 4

CHAPTER III. BERLIN AND EAST-WEST DETENTE IN EUROPE 23

ADDENDUM 34

BIBLIOGRAPHY 36

PREFACE

In recent years, it has become a popular pastime for laymen and and academicians alike to debate the continuing nature of the Cold War. However, whether the debaters support the thesis that the Cold War has ended, or favor views that it has been temporarily recessed, or even that the Cold War is still going strong in some quiet new phase, there is little disagreement that some major issues remain stamped "pending." One such issue is the status of Berlin, (East-West) Germany. At no other spot on the globe are forces of the United States in such close and potentially hostile proximity to the forces of the Soviet Union nor joined over an issue of such overriding national interest to both states. Even the recent contact of NATO and Soviet naval forces in the Mediterranean Sea provides greater latitude of political-military maneuverability for Western policy makers than does the Berlin situation. As the decade of the 1970's begins, the question of how best to lengthen the Berlin fuse is again being discussed.

This paper examines the Berlin situation in two contexts. The first is a review of Berlin's significance to American foreign policy during the period 1961-1971. I have purposely limited this part of the paper to Berlin's role as seen by the President, since the President is the individual charged with the responsibility of determining America's foreign policy. The second context in which the Berlin question is examined is its relationship to the relatively recent (1966) foreign policy emphasis of the Federal Republic of Germany to seek detente with its East European neighbors. That policy, termed Ostpolitik (Eastern Policy), has produced some dramatic developments within the period 1969-1971, and the success or failure of Ostpolitik is inextricably linked to a solution of the Berlin question.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL SETTING

In the early hours of August 13, 1961, combat units of the Socialist Unity Party and members of the Volkspolizei (Peoples Police) under the protective cover of Soviet zonal police forces began the preliminary work which culminated in the erection of the Berlin Wall. This action did not mark the beginning of a new crisis, but rather the final (albeit desperate) phase of an old one. The crisis which was in its waning days had begun officially on November 27, 1958, when Nikita S. Khrushchev threatened to sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany if the remaining abnormality of World War II, the occupation status of Berlin, could not be resolved within six months.

Khrushchev left no doubt as to his interpretation of what such a treaty would mean for the Western Allies: negotiation for access rights into the city with East Germany (prospects for successfully negotiating such rights being nil), and war with the Warsaw Pact if the West tried to bulldoze its way past the regime of Walter Ulbricht. This was not a particularly new threat; not new, that is, until the six-month ultimatum was inserted.[1] The action-forcing tactic of appending time limit constraints had not been a feature of previous Soviet efforts to change the status quo in Berlin.

There followed in the nearly three years after the Khrushchev note of 1958 a series of events which either resulted directly from the new Soviet initiative vis-a-vis Berlin or which would materially effect the outcome of the crisis: a visit by Khrushchev to President Eisenhower's Camp

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[1] Ulam, Adam B., Expansion & Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-67, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1968, p. 620.

David retreat, a change in leadership at the United States Department of State, retractions and restatements of the "six-month ultimatum," two summit meetings (one of which was aborted), a change in political leadership in the United States, and most significantly an unprecedented mass exodus of Germans from the German Democratic Republic.

The flight of East Germans into Western sectors of Berlin and the Federal Republic of Germany had been going on since the end of World War II. However, with the Soviet threat to sign a separate peace treaty with Walter Ulbricht the implications to any Germans who still wished to leave the GDR were quite clear: get out while a border opening still remained. The numbers of refugees grew exponentially. In 1959, 78,406 applied for emergency admission to the Federal Republic of Germany. In 1960, the number grew to 102,842. During the first seven months of 1961, 63,061 were processed through the refugee center in Berlin-Marienfelde. In August, 1961, 47,433 reached refugee camps in West Berlin, Ulzen, and Giessen.[2] Total figures for those seeking a new home in the West are impossible to obtain since many refugees never checked through one of the receiving stations. Estimates run close to the four million mark for the period 1945-1961, two and one-half million of those escaping during the twelve years prior to the erection of the Wall.[3]

Numbers alone do not tell the full story of the effect of the emigration on the GDR. The drain of skilled labor, youth, and

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[2] Ulbricht's Wall: Figures, Facts, Dates, Federal Ministry for All-German Affairs, Federal Republic of Germany, 1964, pp. 28-29.

[3] Smith, Jean E., The Defense of Berlin, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1963, p. 2.

professional people was a serious threat to the future productivity, indeed, the survival of East Germany.[4] The situation was rife with instability, and the East German regime, following directives from Moscow,[5] took the steps necessary to protect its self interest--the Wall was built. The effects were dramatic, immediate, and lasting; only a handful of refugees have managed to escape since the end of August, 1961.

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Khrushchev, Nikita S., Khrushchev Remembers, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1970, pp. 452-460.

CHAPTER II

BERLIN AS VIEWED FROM WASHINGTON

Excluding the waning days of the Eisenhower Administration, three Presidents of the United States have dealt with Berlin as a policy issue during the period 1961-1971. However, only Presidents Kennedy and Nixon have had to deal with the Berlin question on a level which inspired political analysts of mass communications to speculate on the direction which the policy would take. The Administration of Lyndon Baines Johnson was able to deal with the Berlin question in a very low profile manner. If one were to attempt some form of graphic presentation of this phenomenon, using as a measure of public interest such things as Presidential utterances, government publications, and newspaper editorials, the result would be a slightly distended, inverted bell curve. The curve would drop sharply in early 1962, and begin a recovery climb at the end of 1968. A finding of this sort prompts a number of questions: what was at stake in terms of American foreign policy in the early Kennedy period? What changes in policy emphasis and what events occurred to cause a decline in the visible Presidential interest in the Berlin issue? And finally, what change in policy emphasis and what events caused Berlin to resurface as a visible area of Presidential concern? This chapter will examine those questions.

A note of caution is necessary, however. Because this study examines a period of contemporary history, the conclusions drawn may be more apparent than real as a result of the better than even chance that significant data which could alter the conclusions is not available either for reasons of national security or the personal preference of individuals in possession of such data.

President Kennedy and Berlin

When President Kennedy took office in January, 1961, the "peace-treaty-ultimatum" crisis in Berlin had been underway for over two years. Even before his election, Kennedy's policy inclination on Berlin was quite clear. In July, 1960, he had announced on the television program Meet The Press that he felt America should make it plain to Khrushchev that no amount of pressure would shake U.S. commitment to carry out long-established obligations in Berlin.[1] The last six months of 1960 were relatively quiet in Berlin, Khrushchev having apparently decided to wait until the new President took the reins of government before making new initiatives. Even though the Soviet Premier's menacing remarks concerning the link between his personal prestige and a settlement on Berlin were made during the last days of the Eisenhower Presidency, there is little doubt that they were intended for consumption by the incoming American Chief Executive.[2]

Once in office, Kennedy moved to assess more fully the Western commitments to Berlin and the wherewithal to carry through on them. The initial steps involved a request for an appraisal of the situation in Berlin from former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, and a review of defense capabilities by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. Within a few months, it became apparent that the Acheson report and the McNamara findings dovetailed neatly, however the results which could be expected if the Berlin crisis deepened would be an exchange of nuclear weapons

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[1] Schlesinger, Arthur M. Jr., A Thousand Days, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1965, p. 347.

[2] Ibid.

between Russia and the United States. The Acheson memorandum opted for a no-compromise, no-negotiation, fight-if-we-have-to posture. The McNamara findings indicated that the profound majority of the Western military eggs were in the nuclear basket. Contingency plans for a military confrontation with the Soviets over Berlin provided for almost no intermediate steps between declaration of emergency and Presidential authorization for nuclear delivery.[3]

The dangers inherent in the massive retaliation formula of national defense had been cited many times by Kennedy. On October 16, 1959, in Lake Charles, Louisiana, Kennedy spoke of the need for conventional weapons and a limited, non-nuclear war capability in the atomic age.[4] In that speech he mentioned specifically the serious reduction in our capacity to deal effectively with Berlin crises as a result of the draw down of military manpower begun in 1954.[5]

So, in 1961, the President reaffirmed his earlier convictions of the need for a flexible response capability by means of the McNamara inquiry. Even before Kennedy's meeting with Khrushchev in Vienna in June, 1961, the President had begun the process of shifting the emphasis of American military power away from an undue reliance on nuclear deterrence.

The Berlin crisis provided a real-life situation to dramatize the necessity for a nation's possession of a flexible response capability. Of the three crises in 1961: Laos, Bay of Pigs Cuba and Berlin, the

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[3] Ibid., p. 388. See also Sorensen, Theodore C., Kennedy, Harper and Row, New York, 1965, p. 588.

[4] Kennedy, John F., The Strategy of Peace, Harper and Row, New York, 1960, pp. 183-186.

[5] Ibid., p. 185.

Berlin affair proved the most effective tool for exerting leverage to obtain popular and Congressional support for the shift to a flexible response defense posture. If the crisis in Berlin were to deteriorate into a shooting war, all of the elements of the President's program for shifting away from an all-or-nothing (nuclear weapons-or-surrender) strategy would play significant roles. In consonance with that possibility, the efforts to sell Congress on the budgetary increases required for such a program consistently linked the shift in defense posture with the threat in Berlin. At the same time, however, those who testified before Congress were careful to point out that the new defense program was not tailored exclusively to the Berlin situation, but rather provided the President with a greater range of military alternatives to meet crises anywhere in the world. Another of the strengths of Berlin as a lever for adoption of the new defense program was the simple fact that the United States was already committed to the defense of Berlin. Although the we-owe-it-to-the-boys-at-the-front aspect was not explicitly pursued, it was implicit in the discussions concerning the staying power of forces in Europe should the Soviet Union launch a concerted conventional weapons offensive.

The Administration's carefully orchestrated campaign to win support for a flexible response military inventory was not Machiavellian in nature. That so many of the attributes of the Berlin crisis dovetailed neatly into the campaign was no mere coincidence. Berlin was the point at which U.S. and Soviet armed forces stood muzzle-to-muzzle, and was therefore the place where military confrontation could most logically be expected to occur. With a military plan which leapfrogged from provocation to nuclear exchange, the results would be disastrous. Neither

Laos nor Cuba, in 1961, could claim so many positive attributes for adoption of a flexible response capability.

Theodore Sorensen contends that the President did not finalize plans for dealing with renewed Soviet pressure on Berlin until after the Vienna meeting. Two crucial decisions were not made until the middle of July. The first dealt with a choice of accepting or rejecting the Acheson paper's recommendation against suggesting negotiations on the Berlin question; the second with the most effective method of employing flexible military response to future hostile Soviet initiatives in Berlin. Both issues were resolved at a meeting of the National Security Council on July 19th.[6] The President chose to reject Acheson's recommendation against negotiations, asserting that the United States should take the lead in suggesting a negotiated settlement. Such a move would gain a propaganda advantage, and would simultaneously soften the rather harsh tone of the President's upcoming (July 25th) television address on the subject of Berlin.[7] Flexible response would be applied in several ways. The President would dispatch additional troops to Germany, transit rights into West Berlin would be tested by sending re-enforcements to the Berlin garrison, increased draft calls and a limited activation of reserve units would be requested, and, if necessary, the President would not shrink from the use of nuclear weapons to defend Western interests in West Berlin.

It is essential to this analysis to enumerate Western interests in West Berlin, and to determine whether or not the Kennedy Administration

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6 Sorensen, op. cit., p. 590.

7 Ibid., pp. 590-592.

gave any new interpretation to these interests. The objectives which Kennedy sought to uphold were as follows: U.S. presence in West Berlin, U.S. access to West Berlin, and freedom of West Berliners to choose their own political system.[8]

The interests expressed were essentially the same as those claimed by the Western Allies ever since the end of World War II. Perhaps because the July 25th speech was geared specifically to American rights with respect to Berlin, the rights of German civilian traffic into and throughout Berlin were not stressed. The only hint of change in emphasis in the Kennedy approach as compared to that of the Eisenhower-Dulles response to the Soviet initiative of November, 1958, was Kennedy's stronger emphasis on the word West in West Berlin. This factor is noteworthy, however, in view of the U.S. response to the building of the Wall, a response which argued that the Wall was not a cause for war since rights of the Western allies were not infringed upon. As a policy issue, German civilian access to West Berlin did not appear again to any significant degree until Richard Nixon became President.

With the construction of the Wall underway (a move which caught Washington by surprise)[9] Kennedy tested Soviet intentions by dispatching fifteen hundred U.S. troops into Berlin via surface access routes. To bolster sagging West Berlin morale, Kennedy sent Vice-President Johnson and General Lucius Clay to the city as his personal representatives, and called upon world public opinion to condemn the Wall; the President's

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[8] Ibid., p. 594.

[9] Ibid., pp. 593-594, and Schlesinger, op. cit., pp. 394-395.

famous "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech nearly two years later would serve the same purpose--to assure West Berliners that the U.S. would not desert them. Beyond that there was nothing that could be done short of provoking war with the Soviet Union.[10] Tension was at a high level, but gradually dwindled as the year ended without a move by Khrushchev to sign a separate peace treaty with Walter Ulbricht. However, that did not make Berlin any less dangerous as a potential for confrontation. That Berlin remained high on America's list of places to watch for probes from the East is evidenced by the significant placement which it received in the scenario writings of the President's advisors during the Cuban missile crisis.[11]

Two beneficial spin-offs resulted from the Berlin crisis of 1958-1961. First, President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev both had an opportunity to get the measure of their opposite number's tolerance level for swift shifts of balance in international power politics. It is difficult to over-estimate the importance which this factor played in the decisions made during the Cuban missile crisis of October, 1962. Second, the Berlin crisis must have added further to the conviction on the President's part of the need for rapid communication equipment between the White House and the Kremlin. Although the "hot line" was not installed until after the Cuban crisis, Theodore Sorensen makes it clear that discussions on such equipment had been in progress since the first months of the Kennedy Administration.[12] Indeed, the first solid word

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[10] Sorensen, Ibid., p. 594

[11] Ibid., pp. 667-669.

[12] Ibid., p. 727.

that the President had concerning the Soviet's intentions to let things cool down in Berlin came not by official diplomatic channels, but rather by a word-of-mouth relay from Mikhail Kharlamov, (press chief for the Soviet Foreign Ministry) through Pierre Salinger (President Kennedy's Press Secretary) to the President.[13] A similar exchange occurred during the heighth of tension during the Cuban crisis of 1962.[14]

If the Berlin crisis of 1958-1961 had spin-offs of positive value, it also produced some negative results from Washington's point of view. Perhaps the most disturbing of these debits was the attitude of the United States' NATO partners regarding the President's formula for settlement of the immediate crisis. Kennedy had based his solution on a combination of military preparedness and negotiation. None of the Alliance partners in Europe followed the American lead in conventional forces build-up to the extent which Washington considered adequate, and the issue of negotiations with the Russians presented a serious threat to the unanimity of the NATO voice.[15] The first split NATO communique in history was a result of the negotiations issue; the French provided the negative vote when Kennedy decided to proceed as a self-appointed agent to explore with Moscow the possibility of a basis for further talks on Berlin.[16] The divergence of

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[13]Salinger, Pierre, With Kennedy, Doubleday & Company, Garden City, 1966, pp. 189-194.

[14]Able, Elie, The Missile Crisis, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia & New York, 1966, pp. 177-179.

[15]Ibid., pp. 596-598.

[16]Ibid., p. 597.

opinion within NATO, the split vote on negotiations, and the lack of co-ordination of the NATO military effort were things which disturbed President Kennedy deeply. This was particularly true since he was of the opinion that one of Krushchev's motives for exerting pressure on Berlin was to split NATO into an ineffective and bickering household.[17] This Khrushchev objective was partially realized, but it would be an over-exaggeration to say that the split would not have come if the Berlin crisis had not been precipitated. The seeds of dissent within the Atlantic Alliance were present long before 1961, and the subsequent Cuban crisis of 1962 did more to polarize points of view within NATO than did Berlin.

In summary, the Berlin crisis of 1958-1961 ushered in a watershed in American foreign policy. The decisions made and the plans implemented during the latter phases of that crisis set the tone for the conduct of American affairs abroad for nearly a decade. Prior tc 1961, positions of power between the United States and the Soviet Union were frozen in a mold which allowed little or no room for maneuver, a condition which defied change without war. The tenor set by Kennedy's approach to a solution of the Berlin crisis was one which: recognized the imperfection of frozen positions; provided for latitude of response to probes at America's points of national interest; and reopened fruitful dialogue between East and West.[18]

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[17] Schlesinger, op. cit., pp. 379-380.

[18] Smith, Jean E., "The Berlin Wall in Retrospect" in The Dalhouse Review, Summer 1967 edition, Dalhousie University Press Limited, Halifax, Canada, pp. 173-184.

President Johnson and Berlin

By comparison with the Kennedy Administration, there is little that can be said of President Johnson's handling of the Berlin question. The reason for this is quite simple: Berlin was not where the action was during the period 1963-1968. Only once during the five-year period of the Johnson Administration did anything remotely approaching crisis proportions occur in Berlin. From April until July, 1965, East German and Soviet military units conducted sporadic harassment of air corridor and Autobahn traffic between West Berlin and the Federal Republic. However, Moscow's treatment of the situation generally sought to minimize speculation that a general Berlin crisis was in the making, as illustrated by the Pravda comment that the measures taken were only meant to serve notice of protest against meetings of the West German Bundestag in West Berlin.[19]

The question of why Berlin became a sort of cold storage issue from 1963 until 1968 has two answers. First, the modus vivendi worked out by Kennedy and Khrushchev as a result of the 1958-1961 crisis proved satisfactory even after the sudden changes in political leadership in both the United States and the Soviet Union. Second, both the United States and the Soviet Union were forced to turn their attention to crises in the Far East, an occurrence contrary to the historic dynamics of both countries. Neither Washington nor Moscow showed any interest in compounding Asian problems with efforts at making adjustments to the status quo in Europe which would upset the modus vivendi.

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[19] Wolfe, Thomas W., Soviet Power and Europe: 1945-1970, 1945-1970, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1970, p. 284n.

During the period in which President Johnson held office, there were only a few occasions on which he spoke of the Berlin question. These few utterances by the President usually linked Berlin with the importance of NATO, the search for detente between East and West in Europe, and the solution of the German question. The specific issues involved in each of these areas of American concern are in many ways quite separate. But in one way they have a common meeting ground: the commitment and the credibility thereof of the United States and the security of Western Europe. As the time line following the 1961 Berlin crisis lengthened, the air of urgency concerning future crises in the city decreased and was reflected by dearth of presidential comment on the status of the city. The dual trend--linking Berlin with the overall United States commitment to European security, and the decline in crisis atmosphere--is borne out in the following summary of President Johnson's public remarks in the period 1963-1968.

In December, 1965, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Ludwig Erhard, visited the White House. During the exchange of official greetings, toasts at a State Dinner, and in the final joint communique of the meeting, the President stressed the link between the freedom of Berlin, the resolution of the German question as a whole, the strength of NATO, and the need for a general detente in Eastern Europe. Only on one occasion during that visit did the President speak directly to the Berlin issue. At the State Dinner he asked and answered the question of America's commitment to the freedom of West Berlin by saying that if America's word was no good on Viet Nam, how could it be trusted with regard to Berlin. His answer, of course, was that we would remain steadfast on both

fronts.[20] In New York City, on October 7, 1966, the President addressed the National Conference of Editorial Writers. In that address, Johnson made special note of two anniversaries: the ending of the Berlin Airlift of 1948-1949, and the signing of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Both of these anniversaries, according to the President, were possible because of the existence of a strong North Atlantic Treaty Organization.[21] On August 15 and 16, 1967, Chancellor Kurt Kiesinger visited Washington. In all of the communications resulting from that meeting, mention of NATO was much in evidence, but the Berlin topic did not appear once.[22]

Since no major conference of Foreign Ministers or summit meeting of Heads of State convened to discuss the Berlin issue during the Johnson Administration, there is little doubt that both Johnson and the Soviet leadership were content to leave Berlin on a back burner at low heat for an unspecified length of time.

President Nixon and Berlin

Scarcely more than one month after taking office, President Richard Nixon began a trip to Europe to emphasize America's faith in the purposes and strengths of the Atlantic Alliance. The trip was restricted to the capitals of the major NATO partners--with one exception: Berlin!

On February 27, 1969, President Nixson arrived at Templehof Air Force Base in West Berlin. In a speech made after reviewing elements of the

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[20] Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, National Archives & Records Service, Office of the Federal Register, Volume 1, Number 22.

[21] Ibid., Volume 2, Number 41.

[22] Ibid., Volume 3, Number 33.

United States garrison in Berlin, he made special note of the fact that this was the first unit of American Armed Forces stationed abroad which he had reviewed in his role as Commander In Chief.[23] Nixon also played on an old and crucial theme, the importance of the courage and tenacity of West Berliners in the maintenance of a free Berlin. The President referred to this in most complimentary terms by giving it the appelation of "the Fifth Power" in Berlin (the other four being the U.S., France, Great Britain, and the U.S.S.R.)[24]

In the course of that same day, the President made three more speeches throughout the city. At the Charlottenburg Palace, for official welcoming ceremonies with city officials, Nixon stressed the solidarity of the American government with the aspirations of West Berliners to remain free from Communist domination. At the huge Siemans factory, he issued a warning to any aggressors who might have plans for undoing the American policy of protecting West Berlin. In the same speech, however, he stressed the point that the status quo in Berlin was not a desirable end in itself. Finally, in a short departure speech at Tegel airport, Nixon repeated something which he had said in Bonn the day before his Berlin visit. He emphasized that West Berlin was an important part of West Germany.[25]

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[23] Ibid., Volume 5, Number 9.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid. See also The Bulletin, a weekly survey of German affairs published by the Press and Information Office of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, especially Volume 17, numbers 6, 7, and 8.

In similar addresses in Bonn, Nixon reaffirmed the West's position of being ready to talk with the Soviets on a Berlin settlement.[26]

None of the points which President Nixon stressed were new additions to Western policy regarding Berlin. However, the issue of Berlin's political ties with the Federal Republic had not been addressed by an American President during the decade of the Sixties. This factor was of importance to the governments of both the Federal Republic and GDR. For Ulbricht's regime, the political ties between Berlin and the Federal Republic had always been (and continues to be) the most repugnant of the unsettled issues concerning the city. Nixon's announced resolve on that issue meant two things for the leadership in East Berlin. First, the West was not going to brook continued harassment of Federal Republic political delegations traveling to and from Berlin. Western occupation forces could not stop such harassment, but diplomatic pressure could and would be applied on the Soviet Union to control Ulbricht.[27] This Presidential action reintroduced the issue of West German civilian transit rights to and from Berlin, an issue which had not been raised to such prominence since the period preceding the 1958-1961 crisis. Second, the East Berlin regime would be forced to deal with Bonn on a political basis if there was to be any hope of a settlement of the Berlin problem.

For the Federal Republic, the President's messages carried the assurance that Bonn's interests in Berlin would not be shuffled aside or held

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[26] The Bulletin, Ibid., Volume 17, Number 8.

[27] Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, op. cit., Volume 5, Number 10.

as a bargaining tool if the Soviet Union decided to enter into negotiations on the status of Berlin at some future date.

When the President's several speeches were viewed as a package, a definite shift in policy emphasis--not content--could be discerned. This shift dealt with the German question as a whole, and was reflective of changes which had occurred within the Federal Republic. With the retirement of Konrad Adenauer, the original cold warrior of West Germany, from active political life, the Federal Republic began seeking detente with Eastern Europe. The United States gave quiet approval to the shift in the Federal Republic's foreign policy. No immediate gains were expected to result from the West German policy shift, and indeed, none occurred. Willy Brandt, Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic during the early period of the Ostpolitik approach, frankly admitted that the West Germans had an awesome international public relations chore ahead of them if the new policy were to succeed.[28]

By the time President Nixon occupied the White House, the Federal Republic was making significant strides in the direction of detente with its Eastern neighbors (with the exception of East Germany). The time was ripe for Washington to shift from quiet approval to some positive expression of support for Ostpolitik. A move of this sort could have the effect of getting the East Germans started on the road to talks with Bonn, and consequently ease both the pressures on Berlin and the tension between East and West. It is precisely this sort of shift which could be read into the President's package of speeches in Bonn and Berlin in February

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[28]Brandt, Willy, A Peace Policy for Europe, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1969, pp. 1-30.

1969. Certainly a conclusion of this sort is within the realm of possibility since President Nixon's inaugural address, given only a month before the European junket, stressed the need for an era of negotiation instead of confrontation.

In the two years since the President visited the Federal Republic, the developments resulting from Ostpolitik have been breathtaking. Initially, when the United States became actively involved in the wider ramifications of Ostpolitik (the opening of Four Power discussions on the future status of Berlin), Washington gave hearty praise to the efforts of Willy Brandt. Since March of 1970, however, the Administration has remained relatively quiet on its feelings concerning the rapidity of Ostpolitik developments. Speculation from the quasi-private sector, however, has not been lacking.

In January, 1971, a brusque exchange of open letters in the New York Times between Arthur Goldberg, former United States Ambassador to the United Nations, and George Ball, former Under Secretary of State, presented the pros and cons of why the United States should or should not continue to let Brandt proceed unchecked.[29] Goldberg argued that former highly-placed foreign policy officials (George Ball, Dean Acheson, General Lucius Clay, and Ambassador John J. McCloy) should cease voicing opposition to Brandt's Ostpolitik, because the German Chancellor is only doing what the United States has been forcing Germany to do for years--facing the facts of the situation (a divided Germany of indefinite duration). Goldberg went on to

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[29] Goldberg, Arthur J., "The Cold Warriors vs Willy Brandt," New York Times, January 5, 1971.
Ball, George, "A Reply to Arthur Goldberg," New York Times, January 8, 1971.

point out that, lacking denials from the White House, detractors of the stature of those he named had sufficient prestige to give foreign governments the impression that they were defining U.S. policy. This, according to Goldberg, was highly irresponsible activity.

The Ball reply correctly pointed out that the Soviet Union was intelligent enough to know that private citizens, regardless of stature, did not speak for the United States government. Ball continued by denegrating Ostpolitik as reckless and too hasty; he preferred to wait and see what results came out of the Four Power talks on Berlin's future status. If the Russians were serious about detente, Ball surmised, they would be ready to make concessions on Berlin.

Neither President Nixon nor his White House staff commented directly on the New York Times articles. The reasons for this executive silence could have been many and varied. Perhaps, as Arthur Goldberg might suggest, George Ball and his colleagues were voicing sentiments which the President agreed with. Perhaps the Four Power talks on Berlin had reached a critical stage which required no rocking of the boat. Perhaps the President, knowing that the Soviet Union does not consider the words of private citizens to be definitive statements of government policy, simply chose to ignore the Goldberg-Ball exchange.

While direct comment on the Ball-Goldberg exchange was not forthcoming from the White House, there were, during the same time period, indications that some reappraisal of U.S. support for Brandt's Ostpolitik may be in the offing. Presidential adviser Henry Kissinger expressed personal reservations about Brandt's policy to visiting diplomats and newsmen.[30] This

[30] Smith, Terence, "Foreign Policy: Ebbing of Power at the State Department" in United States Foreign Policy in the Nixon Administration, The New York Times Co., New York, 1971, p. 3.

pronouncement brought an emissary from the Federal Republic of Germany rushing to Washington for consultations. When he left, however, the West German expressed confidence that everything was again in order. What was said during the German envoy's visit to the White House is, of course, not known. However, the Administration's recent massive efforts to squelch passage of the Mansfield troop reduction amendment may give some clue.

The thrust of the Nixon Administration's argument against the Mansfield amendment was the danger inherent in a unilateral relaxation of vigalence vis-a-vis the still present Communist threat to Western Europe--and the West in general. Troop reductions without similar moves by the Soviet Union would have meant several things. First, military readiness within NATO would have been reduced to an intolerable level. Second, one of the most effective bargaining chips in the search for East-West detente would have been lost. Third, and most importantly, unilateral troop withdrawals would have dealt a severe blow to the credibility of America's commitment to European security. It is no wonder then that the Nixon Administration mounted such an overwhelming offensive against passage of the amendment, using quite purposefully a host of "Europe Firsters" to lobby the measure into defeat. The appearance of such notables as Dean Acheson, Lucius Clay, John McCloy, and Goerge Ball must have been as much for the reassurance of jittery Europeans as for the actual lobbying task.

Thus, the German emissary may have been reminded that while Ostpolitik is essentially a unilateral move on the part of the Federal Republic, the ramifications of the policy impact a much larger geographical and political area than just that of West Germany. One of those areas of impact is the inextricable relationship of American and West European security. In the

same way that President Nixon attacked domestic threats to that relationship, it could be expected that he would work as hard for the continuance of that relationship when even the remotest hints of a crack in solidarity appeared on the other side of the Atlantic.

The Nixon Administration is apparently following the maxim--and urging Congress and its European allies to do likewise--of seeking detente, but not at a reckless pace which, to use George Ball's phrase, confuses the wish with the fact.[31] As of June, 1971, President Nixon is content to wait for Berlin negotiations to demonstrate whether detente is, in fact, a wish or a fact.

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[31]Ball, George W., "Exit the Cold Warrior?" Newsweek, February 8, 1971.

CHAPTER III

BERLIN AND EAST-WEST DETENTE IN EUROPE

In the years since the post-World War II occupation of Berlin was established, Western resolve to maintain a presence in the city has been the object of periodic probes by the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic. As such, the West has been perpetually on the defensive. This defensive posture has even been borne out in the terminology used to describe Berlin's role within the framework of international power politics. Phrases such as "outpost of freedom," "glass window," "tripwire," "barometer of changing political pressure," and others reflect the fact that attempts to affect a change in the status of Berlin have meant programs of reaction vice initiative for the West.

In 1970, a shift occurred which balanced the old, but still valid, defensive posture with an element of offense. The new role could best be described as "political lever." That appellation should not be interpreted as being synonymous with "bargaining point." While bargaining connotes some measure of retreat from a previously nonnegotiable position, leverage connotes a method of goal attainment without yielding current holdings.

Berlin's new role is based primarily on two political developments: the apparent successes of the West German government's Ostpolitik (Eastern Policy), and the agreement by the occupying nations in Berlin to reopen discussions on the future status of the city. This chapter will investigate the origins, development, and implications of these two causal factors.

As a political term, Ostpolitik did not gain currency until Willy Brandt became Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1966.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that contacts designed to relax tension between the Federal Republic and the countries of Eastern Europe were not undertaken before Brandt took over the Foreign Ministry. Under Gerhard Schroeder, Foreign Minister in cabinets both of Konrad Adenauer and Ludwig Erhard, arrangements regarding commercial intercourse were made with the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.[1] Yet these arrangements always stopped short of the measures which distinguish Brandt's new Ostpolitik--i.e., the establishment of diplomatic relations and the willingness to discuss the non-negotiable issues of the Adenauer era.

The reason for West Germany's isolation from East European capitals during the period before Brandt became Foreign Minister was the Hallstein Doctrine, a creation of the heyday of the Cold War (1955), which stated the Federal Republic's intention to sever diplomatic ties with any state that recognized the regime in East Germany.[2]

In March, 1966, the Erhard government offered to enter negotiations with the Warsaw Pact countries on an agreement for the mutual renunciation of force in the conduct of international affairs. This attempt to break the icy atmosphere was rejected by the Kremlin in a note dated May

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[1]Heidenheimer, Arnold J., The Governments of Germany, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1966, p. 230.

[2]Hubatsch, Walter (ed.), The German Question, Herder Book Center, New York, 1967, pp. 80, 178f.

19, 1966.[3] That exchange of notes was the last on the subject of detente until the Grand Coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats came to power in West Germany in December, 1966.

On December 13, 1966, the new Chancellor, Kurt Kiesinger, renewed the offer to negotiate on the renunciation of force agreement, and included in the statement an unprecedented offer to discuss the unresolved problem of a divided Germany.[4] If one had to date the birth of the new era of Ostpolitik, it would have to be this offer to converse on the sacrosanct issue of the existence of two Germanies. In the December 13 policy statement, the Federal Republic was not giving up its claim to be the only legitimate representative of the German people, but it demonstrated a clear willingness to bend, if not break, the Hallstein Doctrine. The Warsaw Pact rejected the West German initiative, and, in the spring of 1967, the Eastern bloc proclaimed its own version of the Hallstein Doctrine. The Warsaw Pact move was somewhat analogous to the closing of the barn door after the horse had run away since Rumania had entered into full diplomatic relations with West Germany in February, 1967.[5]

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[3] Hess, Herbert, "Brandt's 'small steps' policy led to treaty signing," Suddesutsche Zeitung, August 8, 1970, Munich, West Germany. This citation and other German press citings are taken from The German Tribune, a weekly review of the German press, Friedrich Reinecke Verlag GmbH., Hamburg, West Germany. This citation from August 27, 1970, p. 6. All following citations will be referred to as T.G.T.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Fischer-Galti, Stephen, "The Socialist Republic of Rumania" in Toma, Peter A., The Changing Face of Communism in Eastern Europe, The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1970, p. 32.

In light of the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia in August, 1968, (with the assistance of Poland, Hungary, and the German Democratic Republic) Ostpolitik became a campaign issue in the West German elections of 1969. Recognizing that quantum jumps in a search for detente with Eastern Europe were unrealistic, Brandt, nevertheless, defended the need for a policy of reconciliation. In an address before a trades union congress on September 2, 1969, the head of the Social Democratic Party maintained that, "Small steps are better than none and small steps are more than big words."[6]

The elections in the Federal Republic brought an end to the Grand Coalition, Brandt and Kiesinger having grown poles apart on the issue of Ostpolitik. The voice of the electrorate seemed to support Brandt's willingness to more actively pursue a relaxation of tensions with the East.

Shortly after forming a new government in coalition with the small Free Democratic Party, Chancellor Brandt issued a policy statement which included a renewed offer to the Warsaw Pact to enter negotiations on a mutual renunciation of force. The new offer was identical to the one issued by Kiesinger in December, 1966.[7] Yet on this occasion, the Soviet Union chose to accept the invitation; preliminary talks got under way on December 8, 1969. Brandt, meeting with United States Secretary of State William Rogers less than a week before the talks with Moscow began, received strong encouragement to reach an agreement with the Soviets from

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[6]Hess, Herbert, op. cit., p. 6.

[7]Supplement to The Bulletin, a weekly survey of German affairs published by the Press and Information Office of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, Volume 17, Number 39.

President Nixon.[8] The Secretary of State also announced, while in Bonn, that the three Western powers who maintained occupation garrisons in Berlin would soon propose to the Soviet Union that negotiations be started with the aim of improving the status of Berlin.[9] In another move to support Brandt's search for a modus vivendi with Moscow, the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels, issued a statement indicating that successful conclusion of the Bonn-Moscow talks would "substantially facilitate cooperation between East and West on other problems."[10]

The statements of Brandt and the Western allies provided unmistakable evidence that the East would have to negotiate simultaneous solutions to the problems of Berlin's future and European security. In other words, the Soviet Union would not be able to realize a treaty with the Federal Republic without demonstrating good faith on the Berlin issue.

With the preliminary discussions completed, Egon Bahr, Federal Republic State Secretary, departed for Moscow where work began on the draft of a renunciation of force treaty on January 27, 1970. Within six weeks, the Soviet Union also agreed to enter into negotiations with the United States, Great Britain, and France on the Berlin question.

While talks with the Soviet Union progressed through the spring of 1970, the Bonn and East Berlin governments held the first top-echelon discussions since the division of Germany. Willy Brandt presented a twenty-point basis for discussion of a treaty to normalize relations with

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[8] The Bulletin, Ibid., Volume 17, Number 44.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

the Democratic Republic. The conditions set down by Bonn constituted a highly sophisticated formula for de facto recognition of the East German regime.[11] Two meetings of the heads of government were held, one at Erfurt in the GDR and the other at Kassel in the Federal Republic. Willi Stoph, East German Premier, refused to consider the Bonn proposal and took an all-or-nothing stand on the issue of diplomatic recognition. According to obervers in West Germany, the meetings proved that the German Democratic Republic still took its orders directly from the Kremlin; this conclusion was based on the quick trip by GDR leadership to Moscow on the eve of the Kassel conference.[12] Following the second meeting of Willy Brandt and Willi Stoph,East Berlin declared that there would be a "pause for thought." That was interpreted as meaning that the talks had come to an indefinite halt, an interpretation which proved to be correct.

While the talks between the two Germanies foundered and the Four Power talks demonstrated no breakthroughs, the negotiations in Moscow on a treaty of nonaggression also proceeded fitfully. However, in August, 1970, the West Germans and the Russians reached a formula acceptable to both sides. Amid great fanfare,the treaty was signed in Moscow by Chancellor Brandt and Soviet Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin on August 12.[13]

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[11]Schuster, Hans, "Stoph Adopts All-or-Nothing Attitude," Suddeutsche Zeitung, May 22, 1970, Munich, West Germany in T.G.T. June 4, 1970, p. 2.

[12]Kranz, Hans J., "Kassel Conference and the Talks in Moscow," Lubecker Nachrichten, May 21, 1970, Lubeck, West Germany in T.G.T. June 4, 1970, p. 3.

[13]A complete coverage of the events surrounding the signing of the treaty can be found in T.G.T. August 27, 1970, pp. 1-12, and in The Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Volume XXII, Number 33, September 15, 1970, pp. 1-3,22

Signing a treaty is one thing; ratifying a treaty is quite another thing. During the course of negotiations, the Federal Republic advised the Soviets on four occasions that the Bundestag (West German Parliament) would not be asked to ratify the document until the Four Power talks on Berlin reached satisfactory conclusions on the future of the city. The Russians had tried to dodge the issue, but did not call the talks to a halt over the Federal Republic's resolve.[14]

Shortly after the treaty with Bonn was signed, the Warsaw Pact held a summit conference in Moscow. Walter Ulbricht was in a panic over what could be interpreted by East Berlin as a sellout to Bonn by Moscow. The emphasis of the conference was on peaceful coexistence, and Ulbricht was advised to cooperate.[15] The political isolation of the German Democratic Republic became all the more evident when the Polish government signed a friendship treaty with Bonn on November 18, 1970. The Bonn-Warsaw treaty declared the acceptance by the Federal Republic of the inviolability of the Oder-Neisse Line, a topic which was not even considered negotiable in Bonn during the Adenauer era.[16]

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[14]Koch, Dirk, "After Days of Uncertainty a Successful Conclusion," Stuttgarter Zeitung, August 8, 1970, Stuttgart, West Germany in T.G.T. August 27, 1970, pp. 7-8.

[15]Bolte, Emil, "Events Are Forcing Ulbricht to Accept Kassel 20 Points," Kolner Stadt-Anzeiger, August 24, 1970, Koln, West Germany in T.G.T. September 3, 1970, p. 1.

[16]Kinnigkeit, Willi, "Walter Ulbricht Breathes Hard Down Warsaw's Neck," Suddeutsche Zeitung, November 9, 1970, Munich, West Germany in T.G.T. November 19, 1970, p. 1.

In negotiating the treaty with Warsaw, Bonn included the proviso that ratification would not be requested until the Berlin question was solved. The use of Berlin as a lever in the Polish treaty was significant since Poland was in no way responsible for the division of the city or the hardships of the West Berliners which resulted from that division. Neither was Poland a participant in the Four Power talks concerning Berlin. The implication was clear that Bonn (and the West in general) would muster support wherever it could be found within the Warsaw Pact to exact concessions from the East Berlin regime.

As of June, 1971, the situation vis-a-vis the Four Power talks and, consequently, the ratification of the treaties with Moscow and Warsaw has reached a point of apparent stagnation. The West is still holding that its demands for a Berlin solution remain unchanged: free access for West Germans and Allied personnel into West Berlin on designated routes across East German territory, recognition by the Soviet Union and East Germany of West Berlin's economic, cultural, and legal ties with the Federal Republic, and the right to maintain Federal Republic government offices in the Western sectors of the city. The Soviet Union still maintains that transit agreements across East German territory will have to be legitimized by a treaty between the Western powers (including Bonn) and the German Democratic Republic. The Soviet demand means that the West will be obliged to grant East Berlin diplomatic recognition. The West appears to be prepared to go as far as to grant de facto recognition based on Brandt's twenty-point proposal, but that is the limit of Western flexibility.

If the situation in Berlin remains unchanged from what it was before the Four Power talks began, of what value then is Berlin in a political lever for the West? There is evidence to suggest that, in fact, the leverage has worked in reverse. The East Germans have increased Autobahn slow-downs during the past eighteen months, and those who feel it most are the West Berliners. West Berlin morale--that Fifth Power referred to by President Nixon in February, 1969--has suffered accordingly. There is a very real fear that Bonn may be willing to leave West Berlin to its own devices if the Soviets push hard enough for ratification of the Bonn-Moscow treaty. This mood of resentment was demonstrated to Willy Brandt, the West Berlin mayor during the 1961 crisis, when, in the March, 1971 Berlin city elections, the Social Democrats (Brandt is the party's leader) received only 50.4 percent of the votes cast. This was a drop of over six percent since the elections of four years ago. Thus, for West Berliners, there is doubt that a difference exists between the terms "political lever" and "bargaining point."

On the other hand, there is evidence to indicate that the leverage potential of Berlin is still real. The Soviet Union has demonstrated that it is serious about wanting ratification of the treaty with Bonn. Opposition to the treaty was evident in the Soviet Union, particularly in the military press, right up to the day of signing. That opposition was silenced by the Soviet leadership.[17] Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, likewise rebuffed

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[17](no author), "Soviet Internal Opposition to Moscow Treaty Silenced," Munchner Merkur, October 24, 1970, Munich, West Germany in T.G.T. November 12, 1970, p. 3.

the Chinese Communist challenge to the advisability of the treat.[18]

The Bonn-Moscow treaty represents a means to an end for the Kremlin. The speculation as to what that end may be covers a number of fronts, all or none of which may be correct. In discussing the significance of the treaty, Brezhnev stressed the link between the agreement and a European Security Conference.[19] The Soviet Union has been calling for such a conference for a long time, the results of which could be the eventual disolution of NATO[20] and the solidification of Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe.[21] There are additional potential benefits which Moscow could realize when the treaty is ratified. Moscow would gain more latitude to deal with the Chinese and Middle East problems. The Soviet economy, known to be suffering, could use the transfusion of German trade and technical expertise to quite the clamor for consumer goods.

The question of whether or not the Soviet Union is ready to make concessions on Berlin to get ratification of the Bonn-Moscow agreement has yet to be answered. It is clear that the Kremlin is not adverse to playing a waiting game. If the European Security Conference is really the

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[18] Speech by L. I. Brezhnev, reported in Pravda and Izvestia on October 3, 1970. Published in The Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Volume XXII, Number 40, pp. 1-7.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Luchsinger, Fred, "No Substitute for Security," Swiss Review of World Affairs, Neue Zurcher Zeitung, Zurich, Switzerland, Volume XIX, Number 12, March, 1970, pp. 2-3.

[21] Fischer-Galati, Stephen, op. cit., p. 32.

ultimate goal of Moscow, it will no longer pay for them to continue that tactic. If the Administration in Washington ordered sizeable reductions in troop strength in Europe as a part of President Nixon's "realistic deterrence" program, the Kremlin's perception of the need for a security conference would pale, for it would have gotten all it could have achieved at such a conference.[22] However, with the defeat of the Mansfield amendment, unilateral troop withdrawals have been precluded for the time being.

The search for East-West detente in Europe can only be described as incredibly complex. However, when all is said and done, the geographical and political center of the search is in Berlin. The fact that the Four Power talks have continued on a regular basis for more than a year indicates that both sides consider it to their advantage to maintain political contact even though a solution to the Berlin question may not occur within the foreseeable future. A West German journalist summed up the situation well when he wrote:

> There they sit, the Americans, the Russians, the British and French too, and the Germans, hating each other's guts, playing poker with the Eastern policy as though they were gathered together in a back room saloon in the Wild West.
> Their expressions are tense. They bluff, lament and occasionally thump their fists on the table. The stakes are high, the game--which no longer warrants the name--is risky. West Berlin, half a city, is at stake and no one has all the aces in his hand.[23]

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[22]Luchsinger, Fred, op. cit., p. 3.

[23]Sottorf, Hans J., "Berlin Settlement Key to European Detente," Stuttgarter Zeitung, January 16, 1971, Stuttgart, West Germany, in T.G.T. January 28, 1971, p. 1.

ADDENDUM

On September 3, 1971, the United States, France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union signed an agreement designed to ease tensions in Berlin. This agreement was the first instrument of diplomacy concerning the status of Berlin signed by the Four Powers since the agreement reached in 1949 which lifted the Soviet blockade of the city. The main points of the agreement are as follows:

1. Transit traffic of civilians and goods across the German Democratic Republic between the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin is to be unimpeded and facilitated so as to take place in the most simple and expeditious manner and that it will receive preferential treatment. Through travelers using individual vehicles are to be exempt from search or detention except for special procedures for suspected misuse of through transit.

2. The Western powers commit themselves in exercising their rights in West Berlin to maintain and develop the ties between those sectors and the Federal Republic of Germany and also to continue to regard West Berlin as not part of the Federal Republic and not governed by it.

3. Communication between West Berlin and areas of East Berlin and the German Democratic Republic will be improved.

4. The right of the three Western powers to represent the interests of West Berlin abroad are reaffirmed. Within limits of security and in such a manner as not to prejudice the

> rights of the Western powers, the Federal Republic of Germany may perform services for residents of West Berlin, and may represent the interests of West Berlin in international organizations and conferences.

Of these general principles, specific arrangements for implementation of the first three were to be worked out by representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. Negotiations of this type are in progress as of October, 1971, however no draft protocol has yet been presented for approval by the signatories of the basic agreement. It is too early to forecast with any assurance the final outcome of this diplomatic endeavor. The many things which hang on successful conclusion of an agreement on Berlin necessarily dictate a slow and careful negotiating process for both the East and the West. The basic agreement took eighteen months to reach the signature stage. It would not be surprising if the talks between representatives of the GDR take at least as long.

In one of his last published commentaries, the late Dean Acheson counseled caution against overly hasty celebration of a breakthrough in East-West relations. Few men have had the breadth of experience in negotiating with the Soviets as the former Secretary of State, and his words regarding the Berlin agreement seem a fitting conclusion to this essay:

> The Berlin agreement is no gift; nevertheless, suspect those bearing it. Especially beware of the euphoric fizz uncorked to celebrate it.[1]

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[1]Acheson, Dean, "The Berlin Agreement Is No Gift," The New York Times, September 12, 1971.

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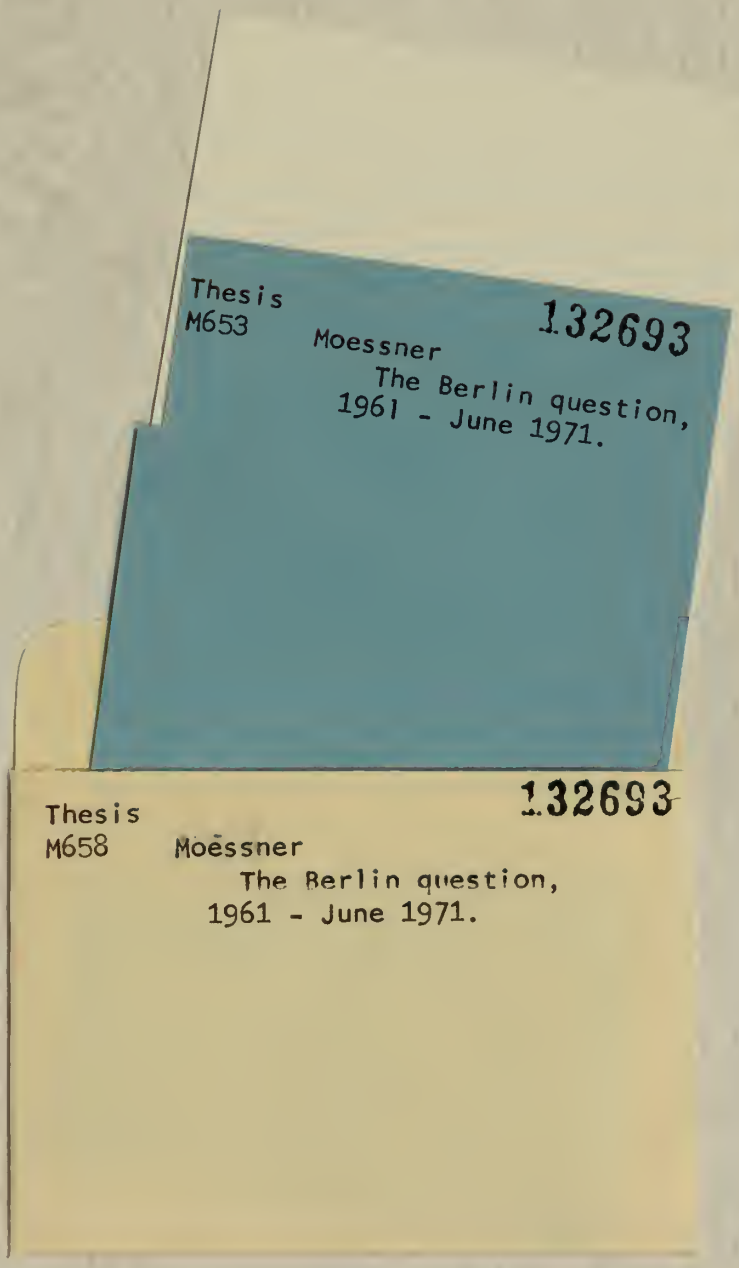

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